

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO LETTER-CARRIERS AND CLERKS.

APRIL 12, 1884.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CHARLES R. SKINNER, from the Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 2409.]

The Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2409) granting letter-carriers and clerks in first and second class post-offices thirty days' leave of absence in each fiscal year, having had the same under consideration, respectfully report:

The bill as originally introduced was as follows:

A BILL granting letter-carriers and clerks in first and second class post-offices thirty days' leave of absence in each fiscal year.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all letter-carriers at free delivery offices, and all clerks in first and second class post-offices, shall be entitled to leave of absence at the rate of thirty days in each year, without loss of pay, upon the same conditions now granted to employes in the Post-Office Department.

After a careful consideration of the matter, and much discussion, the committee agreed to report the bill amended so as to read as follows:

A BILL granting letter-carriers fourteen days' leave of absence in each fiscal year.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all letter-carriers at free-delivery offices shall be entitled to leave of absence at the rate of fourteen days in each year, without loss of pay, under such regulations as may be adopted by the postmasters at such offices, subject to the approval of the Postmaster-General.

It will be observed that the bill as agreed upon by the committee provides simply that a leave of absence shall be granted to letter-carriers to the extent of fourteen days in each year, under such regulations as may be adopted by the postmasters at free-delivery offices, to be approved by the Postmaster-General. The committee believe that this is a just and reasonable concession to a class of employes exceptionally deserving of the favorable consideration of Congress. The duties of a letter-carrier are especially onerous and exacting, and the compensation they receive certainly not extravagant. They are required to report for duty at 6 o'clock a. m., and remain on duty until 6 or 7 o'clock p. m., and often until a later hour, in order to complete the work required of them. They are required to be on duty Sundays and holidays, while other employes of the Government have these days to themselves. If the letter-carrier loses a day through sickness or otherwise, whether that day be Sunday or a holiday, he must also lose his pay for the day lost. His work must be done with exact promptness and regularity,

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and no excuse for a failure in these respects is easily obtained from the public, no matter under what circumstances it may occur. In rain or shine, sun or storm, in snow or mud, he must, or is expected to, do his work equally well. These requirements, the committee believe, entitle the carrier to respectful consideration and to the relief asked for by this bill.

The weight of mail which a carrier is obliged to deliver is a matter worthy of notice. From 40 to 100 pounds of mail are delivered each day by each carrier, and oftentimes 50 pounds are delivered in a single trip. The number of miles traveled per day by the carrier, exclusive of going to and from the post-office, averages about 15 miles, and several instances are given where the carrier walks over 20 miles per day. (These estimates are based upon results ascertained by the use of a pedometer by the carriers of the Washington post-office.)

In the English free-delivery service a carrier is allowed fifteen days leave each year without loss of pay. When sick medicine and medical attendance are provided by the Government. If a single man sleeping apartments are furnished him, and if married a cottage is provided at a nominal rental. After a faithful service of fifteen years he may be retired with a pension; and in no case is he allowed to remain in active service longer than twenty years. These liberal provisions have helped to secure the best talent and the best service, and are worthy the attention of those who are anxious to see the free-delivery service of the United States made as perfect and efficient as possible. The cost of granting the proposed leave of absence would not be great.

On the 16th of January, 1884, there were employed as follows:

1,985 carriers, at \$1,000 per year.....	\$1,985,000
891 carriers, at 850 per year.....	757,350
367 carriers, at 800 per year.....	293,600
645 carriers, at 600 per year.....	387,000
<hr/> 3,888	<hr/> 3,422,950

Should every carrier employed take advantage of the privilege sought to be granted by this bill, viz, two weeks leave of absence, the cost would be one twenty-sixth part of the above sum, amounting to \$131,652.

VIEWS OF THE MINORITY.

The undersigned members of your Committee on the Post-Office and Post-Roads beg leave to submit the following as the views of the minority upon House bill 2409.

This bill has been reported favorably by the majority of this committee. If it becomes a law, a leave of absence of fifteen days will have to be granted to each letter-carrier in the service annually with pay. There are now—

1,985 carriers at \$1,000 per annum.....	\$1,985,000
891 carriers at 850 per annum.....	757,350
367 carriers at 800 per annum.....	293,600
645 carriers at 600 per annum.....	387,000
3,888.....	3,422,950

This shows an average annual compensation to each carrier of \$956.64. The Postmaster-General will have to supply the places of these 3,888 carriers during their absence, and the substitutes will have to be paid out of appropriations made by Congress. These substitutes are entitled to receive, under existing law, the same rate of compensation now paid to carriers whose routes they may be called upon to serve. This will require an additional appropriation to keep up the service as at present constituted of \$142,602.97 annually. This, it will be seen, does not take into consideration the fact that additional carriers may be employed as the service may require, in which case the amount of appropriation will have to be correspondingly increased by Congress.

It was claimed during the discussion of the post-office appropriation bill at the present session, that the amount appropriated for this branch of the service was inadequate, and that the carrier system would be rendered inefficient. To pass this bill and make a greater deficiency will certainly not promote the efficiency of this important branch of the public service. We are opposed to the passage of this bill because it is, in our opinion, a bad and dangerous principle to enact into the form of law. If it become a law, it will be the first time, so far as we are advised, that Congress has by law compelled the head of a Department of Government to grant a leave of absence to the employés for any stated period regardless of the effect such absence will have upon the public service.

The substitutes are not presumed to be as familiar with the routes as the carriers whom they will be called upon to succeed during such absence. The substitutes cannot remain upon any one route for a longer space of time than fifteen days—just about a sufficient length of time to become familiar with the route—and they must either be sent to take some other route or an entire new man will have to be taken as a substitute. We presume it will be said that these substitutes will be limited in number, and that it will be managed by the Department so as to have experienced men employed as substitutes whenever and wherever practicable. This may be true; but we claim a substitute cannot be kept upon any one route for more than fifteen days in one year.

The bill is erroneous in principle. It pays an employé in the public service for work which he is not expected to perform. A letter-carrier is singled out from other employés of the Government, and especially from the clerks in the different post-offices throughout the country, who are as meritorious as the carriers, and the Government is required by

law to pay carriers for twelve months' service when only eleven and one-half months are required to be rendered. We believe letter-carriers are as well paid as any of the employés in the public service requiring no higher qualifications than those necessary to the proper discharge of their duties.

The clerks in the following designated post-offices, and who no doubt possess equal if not superior qualifications than those necessarily possessed by letter-carriers, are not any better, if as well, paid as the carriers, as will appear by an inspection of the table following, showing the average compensation paid to both classes of employés in the cities mentioned.

Statement showing the average compensation of clerks in the post-offices at New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Washington, Baltimore, and the letter-carriers of said cities.

Office.	Number of clerks in office.	Total compensation for clerks.	Average compensation for clerks.	Average compensation for carriers.
1. New York, N. Y.	857	\$804, 739	\$939	\$924 78
2. Chicago, Ill.	426	386, 545	907	897 83
3. Philadelphia, Pa.	348	266, 915	767	924 43
4. Boston, Mass.	296	254, 325	859	937 49
5. Saint Louis, Mo.	183	150, 500	822	952 70
6. Washington, D. C.	183	146, 580	801	915 94
7. Cincinnati, Ohio.	129	115, 575	896	925 92
8. Baltimore, Md.	106	96, 750	913	911 50

We therefore recommend that the bill lie upon the table.

Respectfully submitted,

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